

San Antonio, TX - Congressman Ciro D. Rodriguez (TX-23), a member of the House Veteran's Affairs Committee, received an A+ with a score of 13 out of 13 from the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) in its 2008 Congressional Report Card. Released this month, the nonpartisan group's report card grades all U.S. members of Congress on their leadership and voting record on key Iraq and Afghanistan veterans' issues including the GI Bill, VA funding and mental health care.

"I care deeply about our troops and keeping the promise to our veterans," said Rodriguez. "I consider it an honor to work hard for the men and women who have given America their best through their courageous service."

President Bush recently signed into law S. 2617, the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act (COLA) of 2008. Rodriguez was the sponsor of the House version of the bill. COLA increases disability payments to our nation's veterans and survivor families and is based on the Consumer Price Index, the same index the government uses to adjust social security benefits each year.

The president also recently signed into law S. 2162, the Veterans' Mental Health and Other Care Improvements Act of 2008. The bill contains provisions of H.R.1527, the Rural Veterans Access to Care Act, which Rodriguez co-sponsored. ¶
Among other enhancements, the law directs the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) to conduct a pilot program to permit highly rural veterans enrolled in the VA health system to receive covered health services through providers other than those of the VA.

"IAVA Action's 2008 Congressional Report Card recognizes those lawmakers who refused to compromise on the most important issues facing Iraq and Afghanistan veterans, said Paul Rieckhoff, executive director of IAVA. "From passing a new GI Bill to increasing VA funding by over 10 billion dollars, the 110th Congress has made tremendous progress on behalf of America's newest generation of heroes. Congressman Rodriguez received an A+ from IAVA Action, and we would like to thank him for his leadership on these critical issues."

Rodriguez visited troops in Iraq and Germany in August with VA Secretary Dr. James Peake and a bipartisan group of members of Congress.

